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DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI RPORTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2018
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SUBJECT: FORMER POLISH PRESIDENT WALESA STILL INTENDS TO
VISIT VENEZUELA IN FUTURE

REF: CARACAS 1559

Classified By: Political Counselor F. Daniel Sainz for Reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Post appreciates and concurs with Embassy Caracas' reporting (reftel) on the aborted visit of former Polish President Lech Walesa to Venezuela. Although they were not responsible for arranging Walesa's visit, MFA officials downplayed "exaggerated" Polish press coverage of the visit cancellation, noting that Walesa was not declared "persona non grata," and that the Venezuelan Government did not suggest explicitly that he would be unwelcome in the future. According to Ewa Kinast, Deputy Director of the MFA Americas Department, the former president canceled his visit when informed that Venezuelan authorities would not be able to provide adequate security on such short notice. Kinast told us that Walesa still intended to visit Venezuela in the future to promote his pro-democracy theme -- but not before the November 23 elections.

¶2. (SBU) Despite MFA attempts to downplay official Venezuelan antagonism to a Walesa visit, Piotr Gulczynski, head of the Warsaw-based Lech Walesa Institute, told the media earlier this month that the cancellation was "a sign that they do not want him there." Walesa told media that the suggestion that he not travel to Venezuela at this time was probably a response to his frequent criticism of President Hugo Chavez and his refusal to meet with the Venezuelan President.
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